

**Blind Task Force Meeting  
February 22, 2006  
Missouri School Boards Association (MSBA)  
2100 I-70 Drive, S.W.  
Columbia, Missouri**

**Action Points:**

- Add Custodian of Records to next agenda. Betty McCartney and Russ McCampbell
- Provide Transition Report to Susan Ford. Grenetha Baldwin
- Send a letter to Dr. Chris Craig and Dr. Paul Ajuwon requesting a presentation on the Missouri State University program at the Vision Summit. Steve Berman or Russ McCampbell
- Send an e-mail to all Task Force Members to determine availability for volunteering at the Summit. Steve Berman
- Contact special education director about Task Force membership. Betty McCartney
- Contact public school administrator about Task Force membership. Russ McCampbell

**Members Present:** Karen Berley; Steve Berman; Donna Borgmeyer; Susan Ford; Melodie Friedebach; Chip Hailey; Brad Hart; Kent Kolaga; Russ McCampbell; Patti Schonlau; Jim Sucharski; Ella Wolfe.

**Members Not Present:** Paul Ajuwon (excused)

**Guests Present:** Anthony Blades; Jennifer Coy; TJ Hunt; Doreen Frappier; Lindsey Jerichow; Mike Merrick (joined the meeting at noon).

**DESE Staff Present:** Lori Conner; Heidi Atkins-Lieberman.

**Welcome and Introduction of New Members:** Russ McCampbell called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. All present introduced themselves including the new BTF members: Chip Hailey, Employer Representative; Brad Hart, Parent Representative; Ella Wolfe, Teacher of VI; and Susan Ford, National Federation of the Blind representative.

**Background/Protocol Issues:** Russ McCampbell reviewed background and protocol issues related to the Blind Task Force: The Task Force was created by House Bill 401, as enacted by the Missouri General Assembly and signed into law by the Governor in 1999. Members were first appointed in 2000 and this is the sixth year the BTF has been in operation.

Task Force members are appointed by the Commissioner of Education, currently Dr. Kent King, in cooperation with the Director of Social Services or his/her designee, currently Mike Fester, Deputy Director of the Rehabilitation Services for the Blind.

According to BTF bylaws, there are to be 17 members:

- One Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- One Missouri School for the Blind
- One Department of Social Services (DSS)
- Two Consumer Organizations (NFB/MCB) (one from each)
- Two Teachers of the Visually Impaired
- One Special Education Administrator
- One School Building Principal
- Two Current Students (a student who is currently enrolled in a secondary or post-secondary school)
- Two Parents of Blind or Visually Impaired Students
- One Employer
- One Institution of Higher Education
- One Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (FSD)
- One Orientation and Mobility Specialist

Members serve three terms with no member serving more than two consecutive terms.

Several representatives completed their two consecutive terms at the last Task Force meeting.

Currently, there are four vacancies on the Task Force (two students, one building principal, and one special education director). If Task Force members have suggestions for the vacancy positions, nomination forms are available from the BTF Chair or on the web at: <http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Blind/literacy.html>.

According to the by-laws, all members of the Blind Task Force or their designated substitute may vote on matters before the Task Force and are bound by conflict of interest statutes and regulations.

Notification of a designated substitute for a Task Force member must be made to the Chair prior to the opening of the Task Force meeting.

The Chair desires active participation by Task Force members in Task Force discussions.

For the purposes of discussion flow, the Chair will recognize those members desiring to provide comments. Every effort will be made to ensure that all aspects of an issue receive the attention of the Task Force.

The Task Force will function in accordance with the Sunshine Law. The public and guests are invited to attend the meetings. All minutes and business of the BTF must be made available to the public upon request.

When possible, the three Blind Skills Specialists (BSS) will be in attendance at our Task Force meetings and will be asked to provide reports on their work in the Regional Professional Development areas.

While deliberations should be made with and among the Task Force members, the Chair may from time to time recognize guests and the BSS for possible comments or input into the deliberation of the Task Force. This will usually occur near the end of the deliberations of the Task Force members.

According to the state law, the Task Force is to develop goals and objectives to guide for the improvement of:

- Special education
- Related service
- Vocational education
- Transition from school to work
- Rehabilitation services
- Independent living
- Employment outcomes for Missouri's students with visual impairment.

As created, the Task Force is to provide advice and counsel to the Division of Special Education in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and provide information to the Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB).

Specific duties of the Task Force include advice and counsel regarding:

- The Annual Report from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to the State Legislature about the literacy of blind and children with visual impairment
- The operation of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and RSB joint referral system
- The Blindness Skills Specialist Fund as appropriated by the General Assembly
- The purchasing preference of textbook and materials between public schools and textbook vendors.

During the past year, Dr. John Heskett, former Assistant Commissioner for Special Education at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, completed a study regarding the provision of services for children with blindness or visual impairment in the State of Missouri.

The Task Force has chosen to use the recommendations of Dr. Heskett as a guide for additional activities of the Task Force. Among these recommendations were:

- Development of a shared vision for the education of students with visual impairment
- High expectations in instruction, assistive technology, instructional materials, and transition to work and adult life
- Personnel preparation for VI instructors
- Changing role of the Missouri School for the Blind

**Roll Call of BTF Members:** Roll call was taken by Steve Berman, Blind Task Force Secretary.

**Sunshine Law:** Heidi Atkins Lieberman, Legal Counsel for the Division of Special Education, reviewed the Sunshine Law regarding the open meetings law and interpretation. Currently, Lori Conner, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education staff to the Task Force is responsible for posting agendas, minutes, annual study reports, etc. to the website.

- **Custodian of Records:** Heidi indicated that the BTF should have a written policy (a simple one-two paragraph) to name the custodian of records. The Task Force will approve the policy and post it to the website.

- **Email:** The Attorney General's Office website has a large section that outlines a "Summary of the Sunshine Law;" including the top ten things to know; questions and answers; a summary of all the court decisions; and a summary of every Attorney General's opinion on Sunshine law.

Email conversations are public record when addressed to two or more members and when discussing public business. Public Business is defined as: "All matters that relate in any way to the performance of the public governmental body's function or the conduct of its business." These Emails must be provided to the Custodian of Records (COR). Subcommittee members and meetings are also subject to the Sunshine Law.

- **Conference Calls:** Conference call agendas/forms should include the topic, date and time, and be forwarded to the Custodian of Records to post at DESE and on the web 24 hours prior to the call. Lori typically arranges BTF conference calls and can arrange for anyone who would like to join in on the call. The BTF will never have a closed meeting.

The committee chair is responsible to forward the conference call minutes/summary to the Custodian of Records to post to the web. Documentation of Committee work does not have to have the approval of the BTF.

- **Sunshine Law Training:** The Attorney General's Office has a Sunshine Law expert. James Klahr is the contact person who can provide Sunshine Law Training, if needed.

**Violation of Sunshine Law:** Knowingly violating the Sunshine Law can lead to a \$1,000 fine; purposefully violating the law--a \$5,000 fine.

The BTF Chair will review the policy regarding general meeting procedures, posting procedures, etc. with Lori Conner.

**Introduction of Guests:** The guests introduced themselves: TJ Hunt, Certified O&M Specialist; Jennifer Coy, Blind Skills Specialist/Vision Teacher from Southeast Regional Professional Development Center; Anthony Blades, Blind Skills Specialist for the Northeast and Heart of Missouri regions; Lindsey Jerichow, intern who works with Kent Kolaga, and Doreen Frappier, parent.

**Membership:** Russ McCampbell has contacted Jim King to help locate an administrator from the Southeast, Northwest, or Northeast part of state.

**Review and Approval of November 30 BTF Minutes:** Kent Kolaga made a motion to add the list of recommendations on VI Certification that he provided at the November 30, 2005 Task Force meeting. Patti Schonlau seconded the motion; and it was unanimously approved.

#### **Appointments to Standing/Ad Hoc Committees for 2006:**

**Annual Study Committee:** The appointed Committee members are: Jim Sucharski (Chair), Melodie Friedebach, Ella Wolfe, Steve Berman, and Paul Ajuwon. Jennifer Coy was appointed as resource person from BSS.

**Budget Committee/Governmental Affairs Committee:** Russ McCampbell indicated that the Budget Committee and Governmental Affairs Committee would be collapsed together to make one committee since the budget is directly related to what the General Assembly decides. He appointed Patti Schonlau (Chair), Donna Borgmeyer, Brad Hart, and Susan Ford to the committee. Anthony Blades was appointed as resource person from BSS.

**Transition Committee:** The Transition Committee is a required committee according to the by-laws. Dr. Heskett's report indicated a need for smoother transition. Appointed committee members are: Karen Berley(Chair), Kent Kolaga, Chip Hailey, and Russ McCampbell. Aundrayah Shermer was appointed as resource person from BSS.

**Standing Committee Updates:**

**Annual Study Committee:** The focus of this committee is the effectiveness of the Literacy Study:

- Are we satisfied with the information the Department of Special Education is collecting?
- Does this information give a true picture of the status of students with visual impairment?

The Committee will prepare questions. State Law is very specific as to what should be included in the study. Data is collected from APH, Core Data (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education), and RSB.

The Annual Blind/Visually Impaired Literacy Study must be submitted to the legislature by December 1 of each year. Changes or additions to the questions need to be submitted to Jackie McKim by mid-November for inclusion in the survey. The survey is sent out with the Federal Quota Registration. Notification via SELS is sent out in mid-December. The deadline for response is January 31 yearly. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education received the Blind Literacy surveys in January 2006.

Questions rose regarding the survey included:

1. Are there specific issues related to Braille Instruction?
2. Does the BTF need to know the nature and type of Braille instruction and how it is taught?
3. How useful is it?
4. Who really uses it in the Department?
5. Do RSB and the legislature use it?
6. Is there something else we could be doing that would be more effective?
7. Is a child a Braille Reader when they learn only uncontracted Braille?

It is hoped that the VI teacher surveys will get some of the questions answered.

**State Plan:** The Task Force, as a group, or individually, may make written recommendations to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for additions, changes, etc. to the State Plan under IDEA. When the regulations come out from the United States Department of Education, the Division of Special Education will give the timeline for public hearings and changes in state regulations.

**Ad Hoc Committee:** Steve Berman suggested forming an ad hoc committee to review the current eligibility criteria for students with visual impairment, and possibly

make recommendations for change to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Jim Sucharski made a motion to create an Ad Hoc Committee on eligibility criteria for students with visual impairment. Kent Kolaga seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. The appointed Eligibility Criteria committee members are: Steve Berman (Chair), Ella Wolfe, Kent Kolaga and Brad Hart.

**Governmental Affairs Committee:** The committee reported that:

- Nationally there is a discussion of how Randolph-Shepard Legislation impacts military dining facilities.
- A Congressional committee is working on issues related to the National Industry of the Blind and Rehabilitative Services.
- There has been a move to get a commemorative coin in the year 2009 featuring Louis Braille.

At the state level, funds for additional BSS are again under discussion. House Bill 401 stated there should be nine BSS. Current House Bill 401 funds are used to support the Truman State BSS and travel costs. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will ask for 4% for two BSS funded out of professional development money (increase travel/raises) and BSS at Truman. The BSS have not had a salary increase in the last five years.

**NIMAS:** The Task Force will need to monitor the regulations from the U.S. Department of Education regarding IDEA. The NIMAS Instructional Materials Standard Bill has not been moving in Congress. The Department of Special Education has to adopt the standards as a state agency. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education must identify a state repository (state entity or contact person to go to the national repository). The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education cannot act until the final regulations come out. If regulations are imminent, we need support for summer/fall for legislative action next year.

**Vision Summit:** The Chair introduced Mike Merrick, who addressed registration for the Children's Vision Summit. The Vision Summit is scheduled for March 29-30, 2006 at the Capitol Plaza in Jefferson City. Flyers have been sent to school districts and agencies. To date, one-hundred people have registered.

Mike Merrick will give Melodie Friedebach (DESE) a figure of total cost expended and number of participants (to include actual number of parents and actual number of students) to date. Last year, Mike indicated that the total cost was \$13,000, with 200 participants (\$65/per person = \$6,500).

Doreen Frappier is interested in starting a National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI) chapter in Missouri. Seventy-five percent of its members would be parents of children with visual impairment; fifty-one percent of elected officers must be parents. A request was made for someone to speak about the advantages of a NAPVI Chapter at the Vision Summit. Anthony Blades will ask someone from the Iowa Chapter to come and speak at the Vision Summit. He also offered to help get the process started.

Doreen indicated that she served on the Parent's Panel last year and heard many positive comments.

There are a variety of presentations planned for the Vision Summit, including an opening from Kerri Gilmer, who is a parent of a 15-year-old with blindness. Wolfner Library and Alpha Pointe, among others, will also have booths. The presentations are listed on the web at:

<http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Blind/ChildrensVisionSummit06.htm>

If there is a charge for future Vision Summit, good attendance is still expected. In the future, the Vision Summit Committee may need to consider getting other sponsors, asking for donations, and charging a fee. A suggestion was made to find people who will present without reimbursement.

At the next BTF meeting, the Task Force should discuss how Power Up and Alpha Pointe conferences are being funded and how organizations might pool their resources together for future conferences.

Steve Berman or Russ McCampbell will send a letter to Dr. Chris Craig and Dr. Paul Ajuwon requesting a presentation on the Missouri State University program at the Vision Summit.

Steve will send an e-mail to all Task Force Members to determine their availability for volunteering at the Summit. Mike Merrick will prepare the nametags and agenda at RSB. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will help with printing if needed. Folders with many interesting handouts will be supplied to the attendees of the Vision Summit.

**Bylaws Committee:** Because no changes are anticipated, no one was appointed to the Bylaws Committee.

**MAP Improvement Committee:** Jim Sucharski (chair), Karen Berley, Steve Berman, Chip Hailey, and Brad Hart were appointed to the MAP Improvement Committee. Aundrayah Shermer will serve as BSS resource person.

The Committee has been working with CTB McGraw Hill (DESE contracts with them for the Missouri Assessment Program Tests). Changes to contracts can take one-two years. Betty McCartney has worked hard on the MAP Test to assure we have Braille reader reviewers. Task Force members participated in reviews.

Michael Muenks, Director of Assessment, DESE, is trying to resolve testing issues. It was suggested that the Task Force needs to have a discussion about contracted Braille. Task Force members raised questions regarding the size of font used in Large Print versions. It appears that CTB is following the MAP Large Print guidelines approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and is using sans serif fonts for the LP tests. Questions were also raised regarding the use of graphic materials that are printed on thermoform paper. Task Force members noted that it has been recommended many times that the test publisher not use thermoform for diagramming and charting because the student's hands cling to the thermoform paper, causing students to read at an uncomfortable rate. It was noted in a response letter from CTB that the publisher uses thermoform paper because BANA research has concluded that thermoform is the best surface available to use in testing. There was also a discussion regarding whether Joanne Baldwin (Braille Transcriber, contracted by CTB) has an educational background, as her resume does not reflect this information.

Staff in the Division of Special Education and Assessment Section has scheduled meetings to follow-up on testing issues. The Task Force has improved accessibility to the Large Print and Braille tests, due to addressing these issues with CTB.

**Outreach Committee:** There are ten Special Education Cooperatives in the State of Missouri. In these Special Education Cooperatives, there are two certificated teachers of VI, three teachers working on certification (they have temporary certifications); and one to two certificated O & M Specialists. No more than 51% of Special Education Cooperatives have access to certificated VI teachers.

Assistant Commissioner, Melodie Friedebach, provided a summary of the BSS/MSB Outreach meeting held on February 21, 2006. MSB Outreach wants to be the state repository for a VI Professional Community of Practice. They have received a list of certified orientation and mobility instructors (COMs) and teachers of visually-impaired (TVI). MSB Outreach will send them an invitation to see if they want to be part of the group to exchange information. Wayne Goddard, Effective Practices Supervisor, DESE, shared information with the BSS and Outreach staff about the site for Communities of Practice (COP) in the state. On this site, teachers can pose issues, ask questions about assessment, and discuss current best practices.

Last year, the Division of Special Education developed a spreadsheet to report BSS activities. The BSS are to report data to the Division of Special Education staff each quarter of the year. The MSB Outreach Program completes the same spreadsheet. The BSS and MSB Outreach discussed changes for these forms for the 2006-07 school years.

**BSS Effectiveness Committee:** Ella Wolfe, Paul Ajuwon, Chip Hailey, Susan Ford, and Russ McCampbell will look at the spreadsheet data. The members suggested that the Committee define effectiveness and how it should be measured. Some questions to answer might include: 1) Did teachers change behavior or practice? 2) Did the advice or professional development make a difference? (i.e. attendance, improved student behavior, achievement on MAP, etc). There is also a need to define outcomes.

**National Agenda:** The National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youth with Visual Impairments continues to be updated. This includes the existing Core Curriculum and competencies in basic subjects to be mastered, as well as the Expanded Core Curriculum, which includes orientation and mobility, social interaction skills, use of assistive technology, independent living skills, and career education. Jim Sucharski will follow up with the latest report.

**Financial Report:** Melodie Friedebach presented the Financial Report of the Blind Literacy Funds through January 30, 2006. (See Blind Literacy Funds attachment).

**Blindness Skills Specialist Reports:**

**Southeast RPDC:** Jennifer Coy, BSS from Southeast RPDC, returned from maternity leave in January. She is working with nine school districts doing O & M and functional vision assessments with students with blindness and low vision. She is providing technical assistance to those districts. Jennifer presented workshops on students with severe disabilities, to staff in the Francis Howell School District. Jennifer serves districts in the Southeast and South Central RPDC regions.



**Northeast/Heart of Missouri:** Anthony Blades, BSS from the Northeast RPDC has presented five workshops. He presented advocacy training, general needs of students with visual impairment, to a group in Maryville, paraprofessionals and students with VI, general classroom teachers and students with VI, and activity-based programming. O & M and Functional Vision Assessment are the biggest area of needs besides general consultation. Anthony provides support to the Heart of Missouri RPDC and to the Northwest RPDC.

**Workshop/Conference Schedules:**

- Vision Summit is March 29-30, 2006 at Capitol Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City. Steve Berman will send out information.
- Power Up is April 10-11, 2006 at Columbia Expo Center.
- Alpha Pointe will conduct a hands-on instruction: Technology and Information Training Workshop May 4-5, 2006 in Kansas City.

**Governors Council on Disabilities:** The Poster and Journalism contest is complete. The student recognition luncheon will be held at the Power Up conference. The Youth Leadership Forum is scheduled for the last week of July (information is on the Office of Administration website). The legislative education project is presently happening. The Statewide Independent Living Council is sponsoring a transportation conference April 21, 2006 at Pioneer Community College in Kansas City. Rehabilitation Council for the Blind met two weeks ago with a public forum night prior to the meeting, and transportation was part of the discussion.

**Special School District:** Steve Berman stated that the Special School District of St. Louis County purchases low-vision aids for students with visual impairment, in accordance with the specific needs stated in the student's IEP. Many students have specific recommendations from a low-vision specialist after having had a low-vision evaluation.

**Location of Next BTF Meeting:** The location for the May 10, 2006 meeting is at the Missouri School Board Association building in Columbia, Missouri.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.